

## **Friends of Vellore**

**NSW Branch**

**Supporting the work at**

***Christian Medical College & Hospital,  
S. India***

**May 2014**



### **Office Bearers**

<b>Chairman:</b>	<b>Ms Alison Vickery</b>	<b>02 99536376</b>
<b>Vice Chairman:</b>	<b>Dr. Liza Jacob</b>	<b>02 96595290</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Dr. Gordon Thomas</b>	<b>0419 238064</b>
<b>Treasurer / News Editor</b>	<b>Dr. Stephen Aseervatham</b>	<b>02 49467882</b>

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***Email:***                      **seyan@bigpond.net.au**  
***Postal Address***            **P O Box 3040 Valentine NSW 2280**  
***Web Site:***                   **<http://australianfov.net.au>**

Dear Friends of Vellore,

It is almost an year sine we wrote to you. Even though the activities at state level may be quiet, some of us are very much involved with the FOV and alumni, at national level. We had a very successful AGM of the Board in Darwin, coinciding with the Australian Alumni gathering. Dr. Sunil Chandy, the Director of CMC attended both functions. Unfortunately, due to various pressing issues back at Vellore, he had to cut short his visit to Australia and thus his plans to visit Sydney was cancelled. He was very disappointed about it and has promised that he would return in the near future.

### **The AGM of the Vellore Board**

The Board Meeting was held in conjunction with the Australian CMC Alumni Conference in Darwin Conference Centre on Saturday 17 August 2013. Dr. Sunil Chandy, the Director of CMC was present as the guest.

Dr. Chandy, spoke about the recent happenings at Vellore and about the future plans during his term of office, He emphasised the need to expand the infrastructure beyond the current area of occupancy, because of the increasing demands for services. A land purchased few years ago, not far from current hospital, along the high way to Chennai, is going to be developed as a trauma centre as well as accommodating a few other specialties.

The much talked about Chittoor campus is going to be developed to a lesser scale than originally planned for various reasons. CMC realizes that to duplicate the academic facilities between the two campuses was not possible. Chittoor will still have a role to play for the local community.

He was very pleased about the high court decision in relation to the selection of the students for medical admissions and thus CMC will be able to continue to select according to its existing criteria. But it was unfortunate that many medical schools that mainly function as profit making entities, also benefited from the decision, dovetailing to CMC.

He also talked about the possibilities of CMC going beyond the boundaries of India in establishing medical education and services in needy surrounding countries. The existing faculties for Distance education for medical practitioners in remote areas is going to be expanded.

There was an urgent need for accommodation and care of retired senior medical staff in their twilight years and there are plans to establish a purpose built retirement home in the 'New Life Centre' campus, which was originally established by Dr. Paul Brand as a rehabilitation centre for people affected by Hansen's disease. It is hoped that it will be built by 2015 to coincide with the planned celebrations to commemorate Paul Brand's contribution to CMC.

Plans are in place to produce a new DVD about the work at CMC in the near future. The institution has been negotiating with the Australian producer who made the last one 'The Home of the healing God'.



The chairman Prof. Ian Olver welcomed Devi and Barry Conde, Derek Scanlan and Mahiban Thomas (from Darwin) to the Board meeting. They will form the core group around which a chapter of FOV is going to be developed in NT. Devi has kindly consented to be the chairperson. Mahiban Thomas was responsible for facilitating this project. The Board wished them the very best in their endeavour.

The relationship between the Alumni Association in Australia and the FOV was discussed. The concept of the possibilities of a formal merger was touted upon by a few members but the majority felt that it was best served for the organisations to be independent but complement each other, working for the common goal of CMC.

The treasurer, Richard Caitens in his report mentioned that a sum of \$101,300 was transferred to CMC from donations received in Australia. The secretary, John Rothwell has indicated that he would not be re-nominating himself for the position. The rest of the office bearers were re-elected and Liz Guiver, the chairperson of the FOV Victoria was elected as the secretary. The next AGM will be held in Adelaide in August 2014.

## **Council Meetings—CMC Vellore—January 2014**

Ian & Jenny Olver visited CMC in January to represent Australian FOV at the Council Meetings

The main topics discussed at the meeting were;

1. Priorities have changed significantly over the past 2 years. The focus of the Council in 2011 was the development of the Chittoor campus. Now the focus is on the Kannikapuram campus, close to the current hospital, on the high way to Chennai, where a new Hospital complex will be built to relieve the pressure on the CMC campus. Essentially, some of the tertiary services will move there as part of this development and architect's impressions show a very impressive new campus.

2. To better serve the townspeople of Vellore, the Hospital has opened a fee paying clinic called - Alpha Clinic. Patients can walk in with no appointment and it is quite modern to the extent that it is paperless and cashless and the patients get to be seen by the consultants.

3. The NEET verdict which allows CMC to continue its selection process for its medical students was discussed. It is going to be an ongoing 'problem' as supreme court has decided to revisit the verdict.

Of particular joy to the Australian FOV was the announcement that the new Dean of the Faculty of Nursing was Dr Selva Titus Chacko. Selva trained in Adelaide in oncology nursing while her husband was training in medical oncology.

Ian had the opportunity to interact with delegates from. USA, UK, Germany, and Sweden and share their vision for CMC. The plans for making the next video was also discussed. The Director has already met with the Australian filmmaker, Tim Nicholls, and it is believed the filming will start during the latter part of this year,

Chittoor Campus - The outpatient facility is now thriving and the biochemistry and pharmacy. services are open. The inpatient buildings are largely completed externally, but work ceased due to problems with a contractor and a change in the leadership in the state.

## Senior Training Fellowship

Every year about 10 senior staff from Medical, Nursing, Allied Health and Administration are selected to go abroad for a period of 3 to 6 months for further training in their respective fields.

Australian Board supports one of these fellowships. We recently had Menaka Raghuraman a nursing staff member from the Child Health Department, CMC, who spent her time at Royal Children hospital, Brisbane. She has written an account of her experience in our web site.



Her main field of interest was Paediatric Oncology. She was grateful that she got the first hand experience working in a well advanced hospital. She was very impressed with the multidisciplinary approach in dealing with children, which was not customary at Vellore. Apart from Medical and nursing staff there were social workers, welfare workers, occupational therapists, Physiotherapists, speech therapists, Dieticians, and music therapists – all working toward the same goal of bettering the life of the child.

She was able to pick lots of pointers to take back home – including manuals of Guidelines, Policies, standards and procedures and techniques in cytotoxic drug preparation, storage, administration and disposal. Her full report is available on our web site.

She made lots of friends during her short stay in Brisbane and is ever so thankful to the Australian FOV for having given her this opportunity.

## **Jawadhi Hills Educational Programme: Summer camps 2014**

In our last issue of the news letter we wrote an article about the work done among the tribal groups in Jawadhi Hills, situated about 100kms from Vellore.

We were approached to help with the cost of holding summer camps for children from this area. Six camps are held for ten days each with 200 children attending each camp, Apart from educational tutoring these camps also teach the children how to cook nutritious food using local ingredients and also to help with personality development. The Australian Board offered to make a small contribution.



Subsequently a new programme was started as an extension of the above. This was to establish a scholarship fund to give opportunity for talented children from among the Hill population to seek admission into various educational institutions including CMC to do courses like nursing etc.

There was quite an interest among some of our Friends in NSW who directed their annual contributions to be designated for this purpose. Thus, \$2000.00 was sent towards this Education Fund from our state.

Hugh Skiel, from the CMC Development office has been coordinating these two projects along with the Department of Community Health at CMC. They are very grateful for the support given by you last year. If you are moved to help towards either of these projects, it would be very much appreciated. Please indicate with your annual contribution if it is towards the above cause.

If you wish to receive more details about the above projects, please let me know and I will be very happy to forward all the progress reports I receive from Hugh Skiel.

## Vehicle for Outreach Clinics, Low Cost Effective Care Unit.

Christian Medical College Vellore (CMC) set up the Low Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU) as a response to the escalating cost of modern healthcare. It is true the latest diagnostic equipment and the best drugs bring improvements in patient outcomes. However, the additional costs are often out of proportion to the benefits they bring. The LCECU aims to minimise the cost of care through relying largely on the nurse or doctor's clinical examination, the simplest and cheapest blood tests and low cost generic drugs.

It focuses on the slum areas of Vellore and welcomes the poorest of the poor. The charges are nominal or voluntary. LCECU has 46 beds and sees around 60,000 outpatients and 2,000 inpatients per year, conducting about 200 deliveries.



LCECU has always carried out home visits, but in 2013 it expanded its outreach work with the support of the Friends of Vellore in UK. They are paying for the salaries and expenses of a team which conducts outreach clinics in different parts of the slums of Vellore. These clinics are much more accessible

to people living some distance from the hospital. The team consists of an occupational therapist, an outreach nurse and a driver, This work has grown and clinics have been started in 4 areas of the town, Up to now the team has used a vehicle lent by the Virology Department, to visit the clinics. The van is too small, and is not suited for short journeys around the slum areas. Maintaining the vehicle has also been very expensive.

LCECU needs an appropriate vehicle to continue the outreach work and expand to new areas where the most deprived families live. They would like to purchase a 10 seated SUV. Recently, a couple from Perth, WA, Mr. Giovanni Torre and his wife Zareen visited Vellore. They were very much impressed by the work done by the LCECU which has moved them to kindly offer to raise funds for this project in Australia. The Director of CMC, Prof Sunil Chandy has whole heartedly endorsed their effort. We will keep you posted on how you could participate in this worthwhile project.

## **The Secretary of the FOV, NSW—Dr Gordon Thomas**

We are very excited to welcome Gordon to the executive to take up the position vacated by Binojan Visvalingam. Gordon Thomas is a paediatric general and transplant surgeon working at the Children's Hospital Westmead in Sydney. His wife Susanna is a pathologist and they have 2 girls. Gordon and Susanna are Vellore graduates (batch of 1982) and postgraduates.



Following training, they were part of Vellore's faculty for many years. Gordon trained in transplant surgery in the US. They moved to Sydney permanently in 2007 following Gordon's appointment at Westmead. They are passionate about Vellore, having spent close to 20 years of their lives there and have many happy memories of the years they spent in Vellore.

We are certain that they are going to bring a new lease of life and will be pro active in rekindling the enthusiasm of the FOV in NSW. Thank you Gordon and Susanna for your kind offer to join us.

## **Annual Appeal for your support to CMC**

Even though for quite a few years we haven't had any social activities, one thing which always receive support from our friends is our annual donation drive.

Many of you have been supporting the work done at CMC Vellore for many years through your kind and generous donations. You have the option of designating your donation for the common pool which goes into the 'Endowment Fund' for treating the disadvantaged or you could choose to send (donations over \$80/00 ) to the 'Person to Person' (PTP) programme, to treat one needy patient and subsequently you will receive from CMC, information about the particular patient who benefited from your generosity. Over the recent years, PTP seems to appeal to many.

Thank you again for your continuing support for CMC.